

Thank you, Chairman, and Appropriations Committee members,

My name is Anne Hughes, from Sharon, CT, I have been a member of Northwest Prevention Network for 5 years, and did my fieldwork for my Masters of Social Work with Housatonic Youth Service Bureau serving Region One's youth and families, as well as Co-Directed Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT's outdoor ministry UCC camp for youth ages 8-18, for the past 11 years.

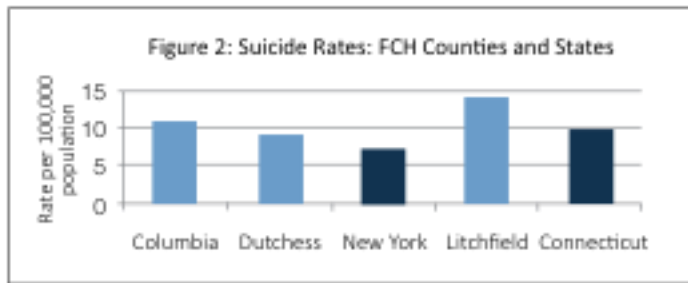
Connecticut is more unequal now than ever in income/economic disparity. But suicide, prescription drug abuse, addiction, depression and anxiety are equal opportunity hazards.... Regardless of wealth and resources, across all our CT towns, from Greenwich to Salisbury to Bridgeport to Willimantic, our modest prevention networks, like Northwest Prevention Network Coalition in our northwest corner of rural CT, invest every dollar of Regional Action Council money that's granted to our prevention network into developmental asset-building initiatives and capacity for our youth.

Our NWPN not only conducted 3 region-wide Search Institute Developmental Asset surveys of all 7th, 9th and 11th graders in Region One over several 3-year intervals, we followed up with focus groups about the results in the schools, hosted community roll-outs of results events, sponsored anti-bullying, peer-to-peer programs, like showing the movie "Finding Kind" and launching up-stander leadership peer groups and ongoing peer discussions; we sponsored the first ever Project Graduation for Housatonic Regional Valley high school Seniors in Region One, now in its 3rd and increasingly successful year – with 80% participating seniors. Every month we convene our network's representatives from multiple sectors and share opportunities for recreation, organized field trips, service learning, internships, employment, leadership, educational outreach and collaborative opportunities for our region's youth and families. We know active prevention networks like ours make a difference. We've launched regular prescription take-back community events, and distributed rx lock boxes, resulting in reduced access to hundreds of pounds of unwanted and unused Rx drugs. We've launched prescription abuse awareness campaigns and resources, trained ourselves and partners in suicide prevention outreach, launched social media and web campaigns, sponsored peer and leadership training and empowerment initiatives... Together, we can see the tides turning and begin to measure the difference... that engaged, cross-community interest and leadership make in delaying onset of risky behavior, and reducing so many preventable tragedies. When you learn of a former camper or former student's death through suicide or overdose as I have, you share the responsibility to commit even more to building a broader, stronger, engaged, caring community, that creates allies and opportunities to thrive even earlier, so we don't have to grieve and face yet another preventable tragedy, the loss of another young person who slid through society's widening cracks.

Litchfield County has the highest rate of drug poisoning deaths among the counties measured in the tri-corner area, on par with CT's overall rate of drug poisoning deaths, higher than Dutchess County NY and much higher than Columbia County, NY, and significantly higher rate New York state. We need to add to our prevention network resources, not cut them in a tragic short-sighted budget. The long-term costs of these savings are in the billions of substance abuse costs, treatment, medical costs, deaths,

and untold heartache.

Among CT youth (Grades 9-12), 14% have seriously considered suicide, 11% have made a suicide plan, and 7% have attempted suicide (CT Suicide Advisory Board).

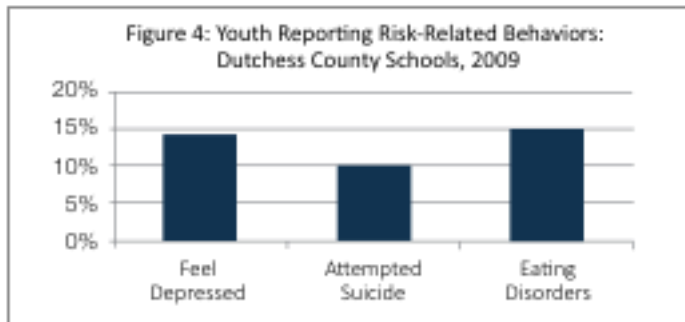


SOURCE: Connecticut Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner, 2012.
New York State Department of Health, 2009-2011.

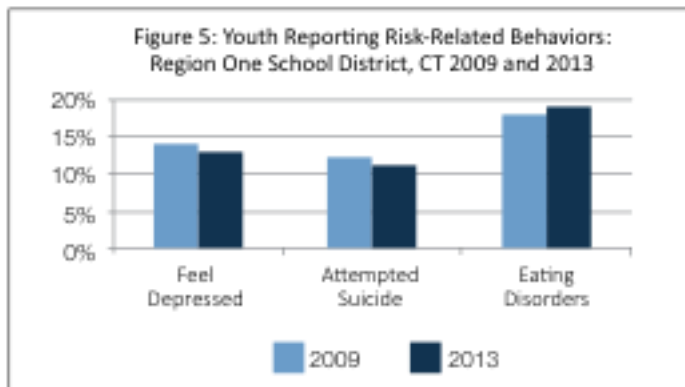
We still find that the number one best protector and fortifier against risk-taking behaviors and the challenges our youth face, across the socio-economic spectrum, is building up of developmental assets, both internal and external. Through RAC and CT Prevention Network investment like NWPN, we can multiply the external developmental assets we build and concentrate them throughout our community using collective impact in strategic ways... cultivating a caring, interested and engaged environment, that draws in businesses, organizations, service organizations, employers together. Search Institute and other research confirms that consistent, coordinated, regular demonstrated enthusiasm and high value of the young people within and from our communities creates resilience and fortifies against the hazards of substance abuse, depression, suicide and risky behavior... the support of long-term, positive, inter-generational relationship building, we in the NWPN create opportunities to celebrate gifts and show that each young person matters....in events like Battle of the Bands, talent showcases, scholarship support and honors, mentoring and interning opportunities - that demonstrate there are adults beyond their own family that care deeply about them: Teachers, clergy, neighbors, employers, counselors, recreation department staff, mentors, camps, parents, business leaders, etc.

Prevention Networks like NWPN, made up of representatives of all these different sectors, who care about the youth and young adults in the community... are making not only a dramatic difference in the suicide and substance abuse rates, but also serious savings in the lifetime of social costs and a lifetime of heart-ache, that these changes in the landscape, this cultivation of broad-based developmental assets in our youth result in. Education and public outreach about the risks of drug abuse and risky behavior is not enough, though we do that, and can do more. We need to sustain engaged community involvement, opportunities and meaningful activities that foster strong and supportive caring relationships and opportunities. This is what the Prevention Network does best. It is something that even the 1%ers, the wealthiest residents of our proud State of CT, cannot save their own families from, without such broad-based, multiple sector coalition engagement and the work of the Regional Action Councils and CT Prevention network. We can't afford to lose any more of our youth. We can't afford to short-change these effective, committed outreach and prevention networks that make such a difference in the lives of so many youth.

Restore the \$736,000 investment that keeps these networks vital across all of our regions. Especially in our rural Region One. We're just now moving in the right direction, building up our developmental assets, reducing our high rate of suicide, reducing risky behavior in cigarette and marijuana use.... and holding steady on alcohol use in our high school students, and noticing a delay of onset of substance abuse in our younger students. This bodes better for the long-term struggles of our youth, and the future of our Northwest community and our State of CT. Let's build on the progress.



SOURCE: Search Institute, Developmental Assets Survey, 2009. Sampled students grades 8, 10, and 12.



SOURCE: Search Institute, Developmental Assets Survey, 2009 and 2013. Sampled students grades 7, 9, and 11.

We all own the tragedy of Sandy Hook. Keep in mind that the multiple violent deaths of Sandy Hook's children stemmed from the context of a single suicide. Suicide of young people is not inevitable. We owe all our youth better-coordinated prevention, outreach and commitment from the leadership of the State of CT, on multiple fronts that demonstrate our value and investment in our young people, the whole person, not just standardized education testing results. We already have the commitment of 169 coalitions and the CT Prevention Network. Let's not shortchange that now. Restore the \$736,000 to CPN. It is a small investment, with life-saving rewards and millions in long-term costs. Thank you.

2013 Search Institute Survey Results from Region One students of Developmental Assets

Risk-Taking Behaviors Related to Substance Use

The protective properties of Developmental Assets are clearly illustrated by the relationship of assets to youth substance use. Typically, strong and consistent evidence shows that youth who report more assets also report fewer risk-taking behaviors.

In the table below you'll find the percentage of your youth who report nine risk-taking behaviors related specifically to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. These findings, similar to those in Figure 9, are based on the total survey sample and are reported for each behavior by asset level (in asset groups of 10).

Table 17. Percent of Youth Reporting Nine Substance Use-Related Risk-Taking Behaviors by Asset Level						
Risk-Taking Behavior		Total Sample	Number of Assets ¹⁰			
Category	Definition		0–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
Alcohol	Used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days	30	68	41	9	0
	Got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	19	54	26	2	0
Tobacco	Smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days	7	25	7	1	0
	Used smokeless tobacco once or more in the last 12 months	5	16	3	2	0
Inhalants	Sniffed or inhaled substances to get high once or more in the last 30 days	7	30	5	1	0
Marijuana	Used marijuana or hashish once or more in the last 30 days	16	53	15	5	0
Other Drug Use	Used heroin or other narcotics once or more in the last 12 months	4	16	3	0	0
Driving and Alcohol	Drove after drinking once or more in the last 12 months	7	25	7	0	0
	Rode (once or more in the last 12 months) with a driver who had been drinking	28	58	39	17	3